

REMARKS

Claims 1-40 and 49 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Pat. No. 496,799 to Pickering in view of Edge work group. The applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's rejection for the following reasons.

Pickering teaches a voice processing system which in the event of an error in speech recognition processing, has a possible response of "transferring the caller to a human operator." (col. 9, lines 1-2) In addition, if the caller is confused by a prompt or does not know what information he/she is to provide, the system can interrupt the caller in various ways including "transferring the caller to a human agent." The transition between the speech recognition portion of the call and the human agent is not seamless, and any information provided by the customer to the speech recognition system is apparently lost.

In distinction, the system of the present application relates to an approach to AI technology that allows the system to perform the job of a human order taker (or similar service) with unique aspects. First, the system can provide a seamless transition between the AI system and the human response system; i.e., one that does not make the customer aware of any such change in control from the AI system to the human operator. (See Spec. at page 23, lines 14 – page 24, line 9) As such, the customer will never know for certain when they are being served by AI routines or by the human response system.

In Pickering's system, when a customer calls the system and the system can not serve him, the customer is either automatically directed to speak with a human operator or can opt to speak with a human (e.g., by entering '0' on a keypad). However, under these circumstances, Pickering's system has reduced its credibility. The next time the same customer calls in, the customer will be more likely to bypass the speech recognition system (e.g., entering '0') and spare himself the trouble of dealing with a system that has already failed him. The failure of the system to serve the customer successfully has done economic harm to the owner of that system. The owner will have to make upgrades to the system and then spend money on a marketing campaign to get the customer to give the speech recognition system another chance. And that system may then again fail.

If the system described in the Specification is employed in the same situation outlined above, the end service result would be the same. A human may still become involved and the customer ultimately gets the service he needs. However, the system has not "failed" the customer at any time. The same animated character interacts with the customer throughout the transaction providing an illusion of continuity or *a seamless transition* (**claims 40, 52 and 53**). In addition, any information ("verbal instruction") the customer has provided to the AI system is preferably transferred to the human so that the human operator can respond to the customer's previously provided instructions (**claims 20 and 31**). This also provides a more efficient system and also provides continuity of the transaction and *a seamless transition* between AI system and human operator. The next time this customer calls, the customer will be unlikely to insist on speaking with a

human operator. This allows the AI system to get continual chances to have customer interactions and to improve via feedback.

Another unique aspect of the system of the invention is that the human response works cooperatively with the AI system. In distinction from Pickering, there does not need to be a line of demarcation in which the AI system stops and then the human recovers the service failure. In the instant system, there is a seamless interchange between the AI system and the human. The AI system does its best. If it senses that its probability of understanding the situation is below a threshold value, it contacts the human-controlled call center for assistance. The human only needs to keep control of the interaction for a period of time required to correct a particular error (Spec. at page 26, lines 7-14); not until the end of the transaction, as required by Pickering. The human has the ability to pass control of the transaction back to the AI system as soon as possible (**claims 1 and 50-52 and 54**), and preferably without the customer knowing that any transfer outside of the AI system has occurred.

In view of the above, claims 1, 20, 31 and 40 have been amended and new claims 50 - 53 has been added to focus on the identified distinctions relative to the prior art. Claim 4 has also been amended for context in view of the amendment to claim 1.

A supplemental information disclosure statement is submitted herewith for the Examiner's consideration.

In light of all of the above, it is submitted that the claims are in order for allowance, and prompt allowance is earnestly requested. Should any issues remain outstanding, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney of record so that the case may proceed expeditiously to allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



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